

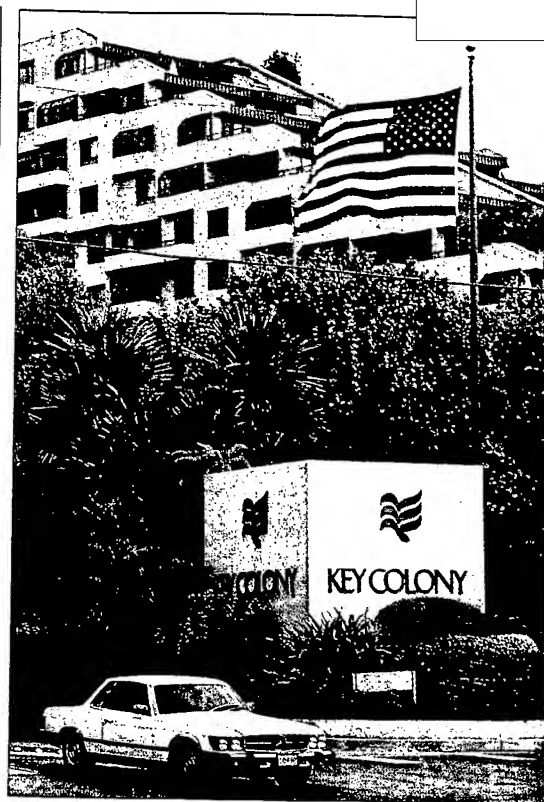
# Are Contras Living It Up in Miami?

## The well-fed revolution

**R**onald Reagan once compared them to America's Founding Fathers—but if the leaders of the U.S.-backed contra insurgency ever really resembled revolutionary heroes, they have an image problem today. Beset by doubts about their military prowess and by persistent reports of human-rights abuses in the Nicaraguan war zone, the contra high command has succumbed to internal feuding. And critics complain that the anti-Sandinista movement's patriotic zeal has given way to patronage jobs, expense-account travel and factional squabbling over the CIA's covert financial support. One Nicaraguan exile, for example, denounces the contra leadership as "crooks . . . almost traitors."

UNO—the United Nicaraguan Opposition, the contras' Miami-based, civilian umbrella organization—is one of the critics' favorite targets. Once a triumvirate organized to unify the many groups opposed to the Sandinista government, it has now seen two of its directors, Adolfo Calero and Arturo Cruz, resign. (The third, Alfonso Robelo, says he will not be part of the directorate when it is reorganized later this year.) In the meantime, Miami's Nicaraguan community is awash with stories about featherbedding in the UNO bureaucracy. UNO's directors are said to be paid upward of \$80,000 a year, while some 40 staffers and consultants are said to earn a minimum of \$36,000 a year. There is talk about travel expenses of up to \$500 a day and much criticism of UNO's representatives abroad. In late 1985—at a time when contra troops were limited to one meal a day—UNO spent thousands of dollars to sponsor two albums of anti-Sandinista protest songs. In early 1986, NEWSWEEK sources said, UNO spent \$29,000 on a mysterious "contra art project" that never came to fruition. Other exiles snipe at Arturo Cruz for his easy lifestyle—Cruz has a condominium on stylish Key Biscayne—and at the contra leadership's failure to achieve results. "We used to refrain from passing judgment for fear of being called unpatriotic," says businessman Alfredo Torres. "But after seven years it's difficult to be quiet."

If the contra leadership has created a spoils system, it is largely financed with U.S. tax dollars. NEWSWEEK has learned



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that the CIA spends \$10 million a year to support contra political organizations—funding that is over and above the \$100 million Congress appropriated in 1986. The CIA maintains contra civilian groups in Costa Rica, Honduras and within Nicaragua itself; only the agency knows how much is spent on UNO or to support contra leaders living in exile. U.S. government sources say, however, that the CIA has paid for contra offices in 10 different countries as well as for junkets by contra leaders. "Like other Latins, they love to screw the gringos," one U.S. official said.

**UNO retort:** The contras' defenders bristle at the criticisms that are making the rounds these days. UNO secretary-general Leonardo Somarriba denied the rumors of \$500-a-day travel expenses and said only one staffer in the UNO Miami office is paid more than \$33,000 a year. He also denied that UNO paid for the contra "art project," and he insisted that UNO is now keeping a tight rein on expenses and staff. But UNO's supporters concede that the contras' attachment to their Miami base makes them look like American puppets, which is one reason Washington wants to move UNO and its staff back to Central America. That would take the feuding exiles out of range of constant coverage by the U.S. press—for even "founding fathers" look more heroic when viewed from afar.

ROBERT PARRY in Washington with  
DAVID L. GONZALEZ in Miami